

REMARKS

Claims 16, 18-20, 23-24 and 26-37 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 34 is added to incorporate the subject matter of previously presented claim 17 into an independent claim. Claims 35, 36 and 37 are also added to incorporate the subject matter of claims 21, 22 and 25, respectively, into independent claims. Claim 16 is amended to correct a typographical error. Claims 26-28 are amended to depend from new claim 37. Claims 17, 21, 22 and 25 are cancelled. No new matter is added by this Amendment.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) do not present any additional claims without cancelling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection and arguments raised during the January 29, 2008 interview. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The courtesies extended to Applicant's representatives by Examiner Hug at the interview held January 29, 2008 ("the Interview"), are appreciated. The reasons presented at the Interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicant's record of the Interview.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claim 21 contains allowable subject matter. As such, Applicant has rewritten dependent claim 21 to be in independent form (claim 35).

Furthermore, the Examiner at the January 29, 2008 interview stated that claim 22 also contains allowable subject matter. As such, Applicant has rewritten dependent claim 22 to be in independent form (claim 36). Thus, claims 35 and 36 should be in condition for allowance.

II. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 16-20 and 22-33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over WO 02/053833 (Hyvonen) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,501,782 (Weatherly), U.S. Patent No. 5,360,656 (Rexfelt) and U.S. Patent No. 5,713,399 (Collette). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

A. Structural Differences Between the Presently Claimed Fabric and the Fabric Disclosed in Hyvonen at Figures 10a, 10b and 10c.

The Patent Office alleges that Hyvonen discloses a press felt, a base fabric for the press felt, and a method of manufacturing the press felt. The press felt comprises a base fabric and a batt fiber layer on the side facing the web. The Patent Office concedes that Hyvonen discloses butt seams and does not disclose lap seams.

During the Interview, the Examiner alleged that the Hyvonen fabric of Figures 10a, 10b and 10c illustrate a single seam or layer was considered to be analogous to the claimed subject matter. Furthermore, the Examiner asked Applicant to point out any structural differences between the presently claimed fabric and the fabric disclosed in Hyvonen at Figures 10a, 10b and 10c.

Figures 10a, 10b and 10c show a structure comprised of a first base fabric module 41 woven into a closed loop (i.e., no seam) with a second base fabric module 42 thereon. However, a "base fabric module" in Hyvonen is a portion of base fabric, and each base fabric in Hyvonen includes multiple layers as in Figures 1-4 and 7-9. See Hyvonen, paragraph [0024], describing a base fabric assembled from a plurality of modules (i.e., separate base fabric parts). Thus, Figure 10 does not illustrate a single layer 41, but illustrates a base fabric module 41 that would include multiple layers as illustrated in Figures 1-4 and 7-9.

Furthermore, Figures 10a, 10b and 10c illustrate one embodiment of Hyvonen relating to butt seams. The first base fabric module 21 and the second base fabric module are superimposed, and the transverse joining areas 43 and 44 of the second base fabric module are interlinked with a butt seam 45. See, e.g., Hyvonen, paragraphs [0016] and [0028].

It would not be possible to arrange every independent laminate layer to overlap as alleged by the Patent Office. If the suggested overlapping were to have been applied to the press felt in Figures 10a, 10b and 10c of Hyvonen, every independent layer would have to be arranged to overlap. Handling, overlapping and pressing the several layers independently would be impossible. Since Hyvonen teaches to arrange butt seams at different longitudinal locations in the seam area, there is no need for the suggested (and impossible) overlapping. The seam between the base fabric modules as taught by Hyvonen are sufficiently strong because of the laminated structure and the butt seams in each layer. Thus, there is no reason to replace the butt seams in each laminate layer.

Furthermore, the Examiner suggested that Applicant review Weatherly, Rexfelt or Collette regarding any teachings to the permeability of the overlapping joining areas actually corresponding to the rest of the fabric as required by each of the independent claims.

Applicant submits that none of Weatherly, Rexfelt or Collette make any reference to the permeability of the overlapping joining area and the permeability of the rest of fabric. As

such, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have attempted to combine the overlapping seam in Hyvonen with Weatherly, Rexfelt and/or Collette with any reasonable expectation of success as (1) Hyvonen does not disclose a single layer and (2) none of Hyvonen, Weatherly, Rexfelt or Collette teach or suggest anything regarding the permeability of the overlapping joining areas or the permeability of the rest of the fabric.

B. Joining Length of Claims 17 and 25

During the Interview, the Examiner agreed that the presently claimed joining length between 5 and 20 mm greatly exceeded that of Weatherly as Weatherly teaches using as short a joining length as possible. See Interview Summary, page 2 citing Weatherly, col. 4, lines 25-31. The Examiner concluded that he would need to further consider the issue in view of Rexfelt, Collette and other references.

Neither Rexfelt nor Collette teach or suggest a joining length of 5 to 20 mm. Specifically, Rexfelt does not even teach or suggest a joining length, while Collette teaches a much smaller joining length (0.025 mm to 0.050 mm). See Collette, col. 7, lines 8-14.

As such, one of ordinary skill would not have been provided any reason or rationale to manufacture a press felt with a joining length from 5 to 20 mm. Thus, Applicant has added new independent claims (claims 34 and 37) based on previous dependent claims 17 and 25 and directed to a press felt with a joining length between 5 and 20 nm that is neither taught nor suggested by the cited references.

C. Smaller Density of Transverse Yarns in Claims 18 and 26

During the Interview, the Examiner agreed to reconsider whether the "removal of longitudinal yarns in Rexfelt and Collette references would render the claimed seam non-obvious." See Interview Summary, page 3.

Rexfelt teaches a press felt that is endless in the machine direction. The press felt as taught by Rexfelt comprises a base fabric that is composed of spirally wound narrow fabric strips. See column 2, lines 10-16 and Figure 1 of Rexfelt. The width of the base fabric is determined by the number of spiral turns of the fabric strip. See column 2, lines 24-26. The strip width may be 0.5 - 1.5 meter and the width of the press felt may be wider than 10 meters. See column 2, lines 32-34.

Further, Rexfelt teaches the spacing between the longitudinal threads is increased. The present claims require a smaller density of transverse yarns in the joining edge. See claim 16 of the present application. Also, Rexfelt teaches overlapping seams in the machine direction, with widths in the transverse machine direction. The seam as recited in the present claims is in the transverse direction with its width in the machine direction.

Because Rexfelt teaches a totally different manufacturing technique, it would not have been obvious to have combined the teachings of Rexfelt with Hyvonen. Therefore, Rexfelt neither teaches nor suggests a press felt as recited by the current claims.

Collette discloses a paper machine fabric including spirally wound fabric strips in the machine direction and spirally continuous seams between the adjacent narrow fabric strips. See column 2, lines 51 to 55 of Collette.

Collette specifically teaches away from a flat woven structure including a transverse seam. See column 1, lines 18-28 of Collette. It is clear that the spiral winding method as taught by Collette is completely different as compared to the method recited in the present claims, wherein at least one planar base fabric component is connected into a shape of a closed loop by arranging a first transverse joining edge and a second transverse joining edge together.

Further, Collette teaches the longitudinal yarns are removed from the joining edges. The present claims require a smaller density of transverse yarns in the joining edge. See

claim 16 of the present application. Collette teaches overlapping seams in the machine direction, with widths in the cross machine direction. The seam as recited in the present claims is in the transverse direction with its width in the machine direction.

As Collette and Rexfelt each teach or suggest a totally different manufacturing technique, it would not have been obvious to have combined the teachings of Collette with Hyvonen.

D. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing arguments and amendments, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 16, 18-20, 23-24 and 26-37 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff

Registration No. 27,075

Christopher W. Brown

Registration No. 38,025

JAO:CWB/jdt

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OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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